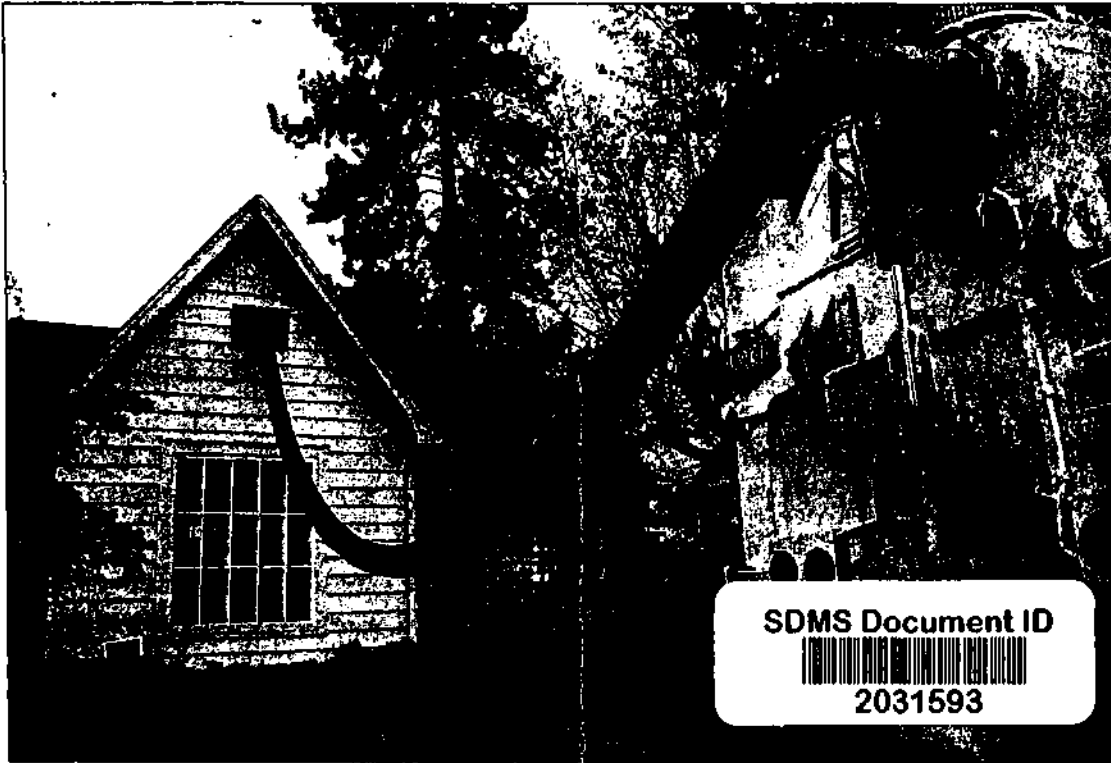


as work part of local landscape



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Chris Jordan photos/Daily Inter Lake

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play in the piles of vermiculite, Brossman was taught to be a cleanup specialist through the Project Challenge job training program. He's grateful for the job opportunity.

"It's a good thing for all the local people," he said.

Many of the homeowners show up to watch the cleanup process.

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Cosmetic glitches, such as uneven sod in new landscaping, or nail "pops" that protrude from ceilings as a result of the attic work, are often the source for grumbling.

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"We're in someone's home and we need to make them as comfortable as possible," she added. "This is the most important thing I've ever done in my life."

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High-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) vacuum cleaners are given to all property owners who undergo cleanup.

Christiansen expects the Libby cleanup to continue for another five to seven years — maybe more.

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To date, the EPA has spent roughly \$90 million in Superfund money on cleanup in Libby, including homes, businesses and the large screening and processing sites left behind by Grace.

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Asbestos work part of local land

EPA cost tops \$90 million

By LYNNETTE HINTZE
The Daily Inter Lake

Vacuum hoses connecting attics to airtight blue boxes ...
Workers in protective white suits ...

Excavated yards and gardens surrounded with orange mesh fencing.

Neighborhood intrusion has taken a familiar form in Libby since the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's cleanup of asbestos-contaminated homes and businesses began in 2002.

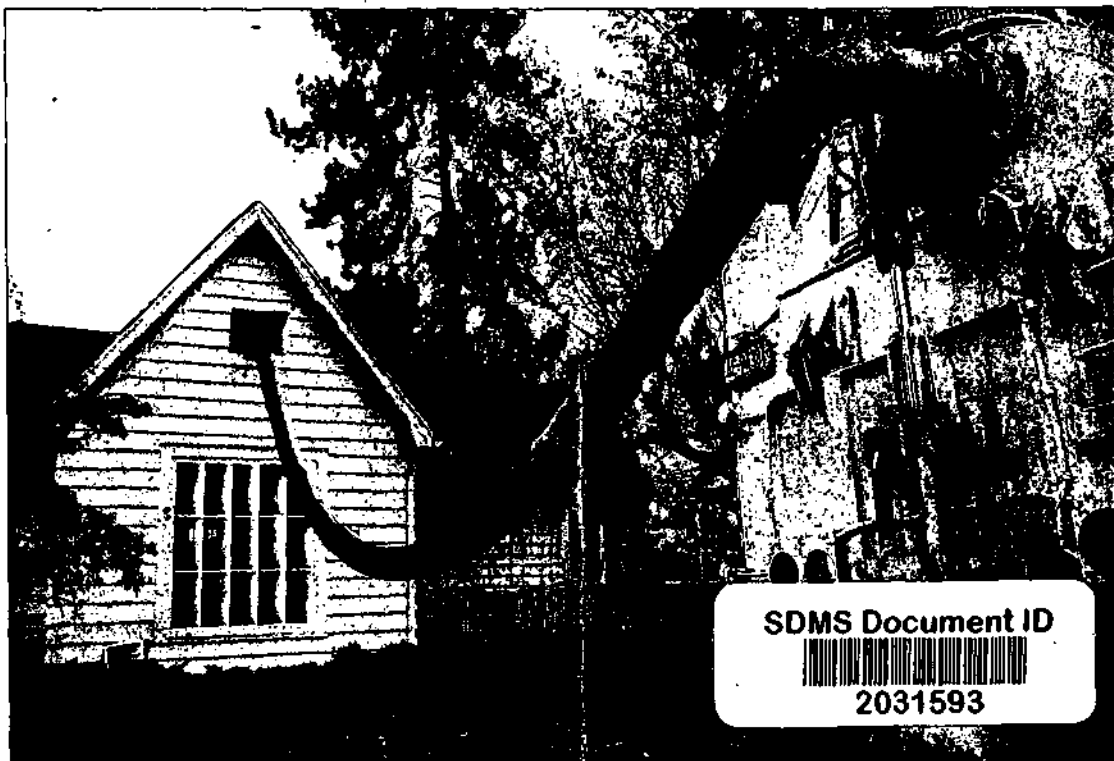
This year, the EPA expects to finish cleanup of 170 homes. A total of 330 homes and businesses have been cleaned to date. Roughly 1,000 are left.

After news of death and disease linked to the W.R. Grace vermiculite mine in Libby made national headlines in late 1999, the EPA set up an office there and proceeded to inspect almost every residential and commercial property in Libby during 2002 and 2003.

Dust samples were taken indoors and outdoors as plans solidified for the most comprehensive asbestos cleanup ever undertaken.

Vermiculite mined at Libby by Grace was widely used in attics as insulation. An estimated 30 million to 40 million homes nationwide have vermiculite insulation, and in Libby, where the material was readily available, it was used pervasively not only in home attics and walls but also in yards, gardens and ballfields.

Once the dust sampling was done, properties were placed into one of three broad categories: Those requiring cleanup, those not requiring cleanup, and those requiring additional study. In many



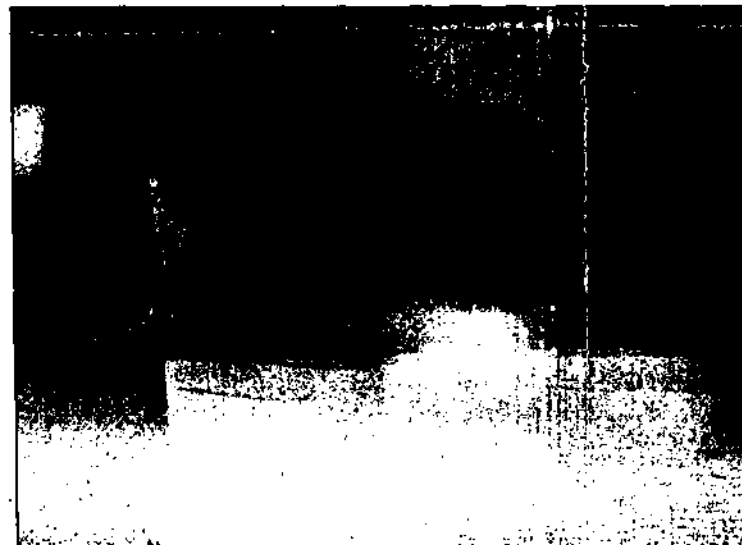
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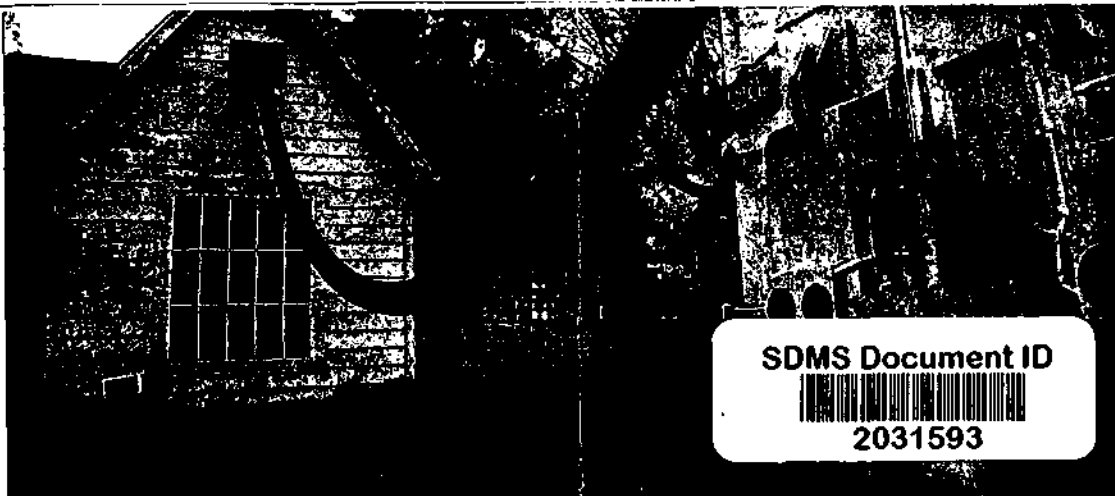
Once the dust sampling was done, properties were placed into one of three broad categories: Those requiring cleanup, those not requiring cleanup, and those requiring additional study. In many homes, the EPA chose to leave the vermiculite in place if it's well-contained, such as inside a wall or a non-accessible attic space.

Cleanup is intrusive work, involving the displacement of families while the job is completed. Most cleanups range from three days to a month. Homeowners are housed in local motels and given a daily per diem during the displacement, said site manager Courtney Zamora.

Zamora is employed by the Volpe Center, a division of the federal Department of Transportation that is the conduit for contracting the cleanup.

"We do what the EPA tells us to do, basically," Zamora said.

Three restoration contractors — Environmental Restoration, Libby Restoration and MSC Environmental —



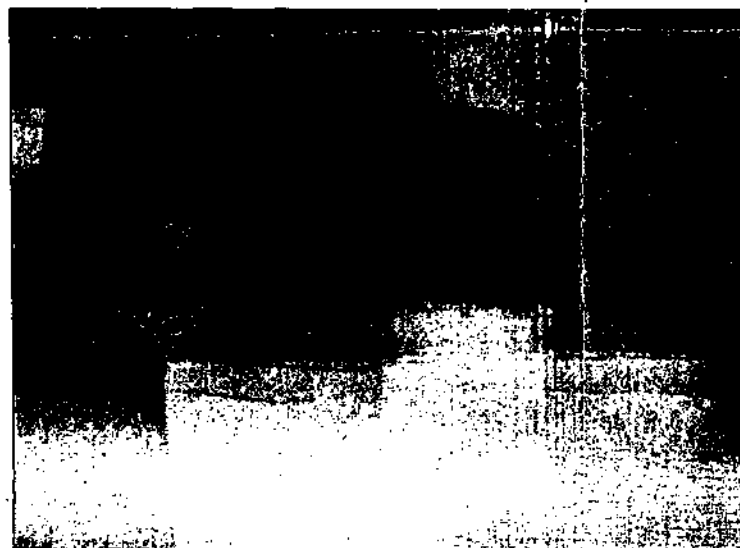
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Lincoln County commissioners share the concern about cost cutting and also wonder how local workers will be affected with several contractors bidding on the projects.

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"They were going to cut costs on the back of labor," Konzen said.

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Les Skramstad, an asbestos-disease victim who helped bring the plight of Libby to light, is unhappy with the cleanup that was done at his home.

"They did our house twice and totally missed upstairs above the bathroom," he said.

He and his wife, Norita, were displaced for nearly six weeks as crews cleaned and then recleaned the home. The first cleanup alone cost \$125,000, and Skramstad remains disgruntled because

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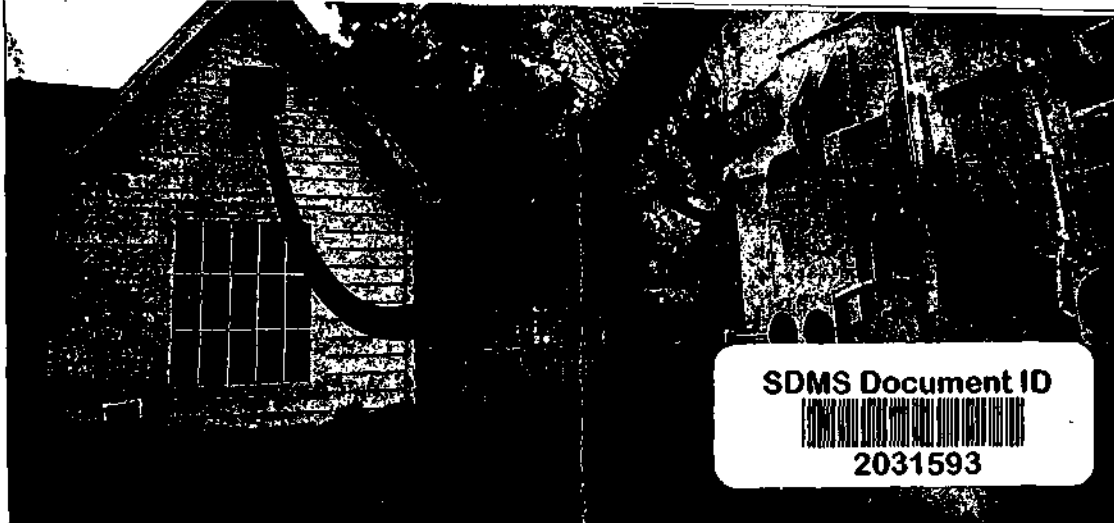
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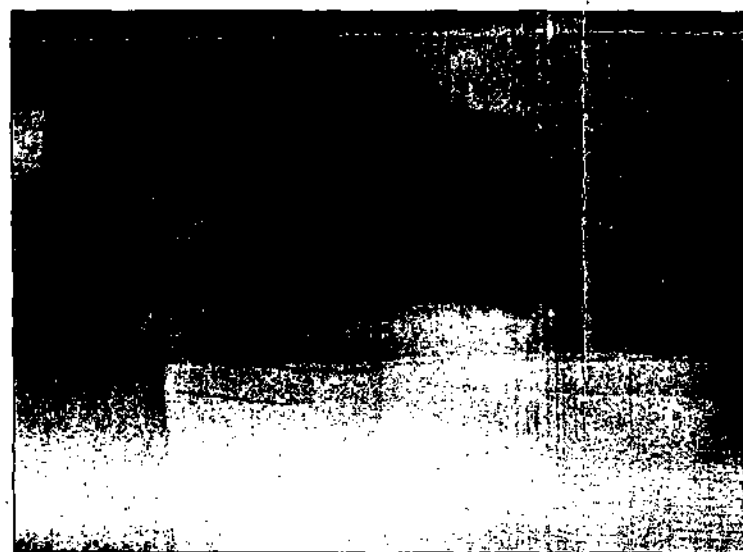
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Is Libby ready to be advertised as safe?

"I'm willing to advertise Libby as a good place to live," Christiansen said. "There's no risk just being in Libby, but there are risks in homes that people need to be cognizant of."

Features editor Lynnette Hintze may be reached at 758-4421 or by e-mail at lhintze@dailyinterlake.com